

Fulfilling a pledge of equal recognition for women, RRCA includes women in its marathon championships.

Beth Bonner becomes the first woman to break three hours (2:55:22) at the New York City Marathon.

Women are officially recognized at Boston, the world's most prestigious race, and Nina Kuscsik claims first.

AAU allows women in open marathons, but with separate starts. In protest, Kuscsik stages sit-down at NYC.

Ernst van Aaken hosts first international marathon championships. The 40 starters include Liane Winter (2:50:31).

The first AAU national marathon for women takes place in San Mateo, Calif., won by Judy Ikenberry in 2:55:17.

Jacqueline Hansen becomes the first woman to break 2:40 (2:38:19), a time that would have won six Olympic Games.

Grete Waitz runs her sub-2:30 marathon (2:27:33), called "the most advanced of women's achievements."

IAAF sanctions first women's marathon, the Tokyo International. IAAF president seeks Olympic version.

The IOC's executive board approves adding a women's marathon to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

Joan Benoit, Julie Brown and Julie Isphording win places on the first U.S. Olympic marathon team.

Women will crash the heretofore all-male Olympic marathon tradition in the first-ever Olympic marathon of their own.

October 1970

Sept. 19, 1971

April 1972

Oct. 1, 1972

Sept. 22, 1974

Feb. 10, 1974

Oct. 12, 1975

Oct. 22, 1979

November 1979

Feb. 23, 1981

May 12, 1984

Aug. 5, 1984

old daughter from Dover, N.H. Who better than Sister Marion Irvine, 54? "I was a little bit worried that I'd have to get down on my knees and pray with her before going to bed," Schiro (pronounced "Skeer-o") later admitted, "but she was just like a normal runner." Irvine, an elementary school principal, wasn't caught short when it came to the roomie situation. "I thought with the time off from school I was going to get away from the baby-sitting," she told her coach, Kees Tuinzing.

You wouldn't expect to find any males in women-only dorms and none were allowed, but one did manage to sneak in—seven-month-old Matthew Geraci of Atlanta. Matt's mom, Lucia, had a devil of a time qualifying for the Trials, what with being pregnant and losing so much training and all. "I never thought to tell anyone I was bringing Matthew," Geraci said one evening in the St. Martin's student union, while walking to and fro with her son in a backpack. "People were surprised when we got here but, you know, I haven't heard a single negative word."

It may be that *none* of the runners heard a negative word during their entire stay. The selection of Olympia (population: 28,000) had been criticized for its small size and out-of-the-way location, and its organizers for making promises that could prove difficult to deliver. Those who spent a few days at the Trials, however, sensing the community warmth and observing the near-perfect race execution, found themselves doubting that any other place could have matched Olympia's support. "The feeling you got," said Rita Denniston, 26, from Hawaii, "was that of going to someone's house for Thanksgiving dinner. You could tell that these people had been fixing things up for us for months and months. They were just dying to throw open the doors and welcome us in."

"We had a concept from the very beginning," explained Brent James, executive director of the Trials organization. "We wanted this to be more than just a race. We



Rebecca Colligan photo

2ND: JULIE BROWN

The day before the Trials, the leading qualifiers were quietly ushered into a press conference where emcee Toni Reavis announced, "The runners are here. We're just going to bring them in one at a time, because if we brought them in all at once they would probably just look at each other and not tell you anything."

That might have been true, but Julie Brown, the first athlete introduced, didn't appear to care who was listening. Brown knew exactly what she was going to do in the next morning's race. Furthermore, she didn't mind telling everyone. "My race strategy is to get in the top three," she said. "That's all."

Ah, come on now, Julie, who are you trying to kid? You faced the same situation last June in the Avon marathon, didn't you? All you needed was top three to qualify for Helsinki. So what do you do? You lead from first step to last and run 2:26:26, the fastest ever in an all-women marathon to belie a history of starting fast and dropping out.

Brown has long been a member of the quartet—Mary Decker, Francie Larrieu and Jan Merrill are the others—that has defined U.S. women's middle-distance running for nearly a decade. In 1976 she finished fifth in the 1500-meter Olympic

Trials, suffering from the flu. The year before she had won the world cross-country championship. The next year, entering the Nike/OTC marathon for little more than a hard workout, she ran an American record 2:36:24.

In 1980 Brown claimed two spots on the U.S. track team, doubling in the 800 meters and 1500 meters. Madeline Manning Mims (800) and Mary Decker (1500) beat her, but Brown was a close second both times.

When the International Olympic Committee announced in February 1981 that it was including the marathon in the women's track schedule for Los Angeles, Brown made up her mind to switch from the track to the longer road distance. Two years later she reached another important decision. She decided to move from San Diego where

she was coached by intense, hard-driving Chuck DeBus, to Eugene, Ore. There she delivered herself into the hands of Bill Dellinger, one of the most successful coaches in the world and one of the most laid-back.

Olympic Outlook

Brown unquestionably has the ability to run with the best women marathoners in the world, including Benoit, Waitz and Kristiansen, the three who will start the Olympic marathon with better times than she. Questions persist, however. Her one truly great marathon, Avon 1983, was a solo effort. She hasn't won a major competitive marathon as the others have. Her style—long, loping strides off the toes—still seems inappropriate to the marathon distance and may be one reason she has sometimes had difficulty completing the entire race.

Brown won't attempt anything dramatic in Los Angeles. She'll try to tuck in behind the leaders just as she did last summer in Helsinki until her Achilles tendon gave out on her. She could climb to the top rung on the victory stand; she could DNF if pushed too hard and too fast. Less consistent than the other top runners, Brown is just as talented. Hers will be a performance worth waiting for and watching closely.



Chuck Muhistock photo

wanted it to be a celebration of women's running in general, and in particular a celebration for the women who qualified and came here. People said we couldn't do it. They said we'd end up with a circus, but we had a group of volunteers and a community that worked at 10,000 times normal effort."

The marathon is a race of better than 40,000 footstrikes punctuated by just one or two key moments. That explains why mental quickness often counts more than physical preparedness. Betty Springs' key moment came when twin 32-caliber pistols sent the runners on their way at 9:22 a.m. That she made the wrong decision may have cost her a spot on the U.S. Olympic team.

Springs charged immediately to the front, casting glances left and right, wondering how the others could run so slowly. The nation's top collegiate distance runner

Among the nearly 12-score runners were 54-year-old Sister Marion Irvine and 16-year-old Cathy Schiro.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING: ONLY IN OLY

Finally. That's what the Nike ad said on the back of the program for the first U.S. women's Olympic Trials marathon. Finally, women are included on the Olympic program. Finally, hundreds of distance runners have a new goal to strive for. And finally, the day for U.S. team selection had arrived.



Robert M. Collins III photo

Jacqueline Hansen's place in marathon history is secure.

served as motivation to reach a tangible goal—at the least, a 2:51:16 qualifying time. For some, it was the best—not necessarily the only—choice left open for a chance at Olympic participation, for lack of other distances (5000 or 10,000 meters) to run. For only three, it

could be the realization of an Olympic dream. For all, it was a momentous occasion.

Scarcely a person in Olympia had not contributed in at least a small way to the day's festivities, if only to turn out and cheer. And cheer they did.

The 56 seeded runners took their assigned positions on the starting line, and the rest of us positioned ourselves at random behind them. There was lots of well-wishing among the women, everyone hoping for PRs in general. Nearly everyone readied watches for the countdown to the start. A notable exception was Julie Brown, who wore no watch at all. Some were obviously more concerned with place than pace.

Out for a PR myself, I didn't dare look up for the balloons or whatever signaled the start. At the front, it was not the time to celebrate yet, just time to race. And until things steadied a little after the first mile or two, I knew I'd have to be alert to run in the thick pack. Lots of hands went up, steadying runners against tripping and crowding. No one seemed to rabbit out front. All seemed content to stay together at a reasonable pace.

While I may have thought I'd be running in a race in which I knew everyone,

the truth was that I could not put many names with faces. Yet it was pleasant to recognize some faces "from the past," like Kim Merritt, Judy Gumbs-Leydig and Katy Schilly. As Kim and I ran along together, she became upset when she registered a 6:10 mile split. (Sub-2:40s were not in the stars for either of us that day, but she managed a respectable 2:43.) Maybe it occurred to Kim, as it did to me, that had we been given this opportunity, say, prior to Montreal, we might have been Olympic teammates.

My pace seemed to hold steady until about the halfway mark or so. I knew there were more hills in the first half than in the last half, so I took heart from my early splits. I tried to concentrate on getting from one aid station to the next or from one mile marker to the next. The stations were perfect. No one had ever before handed me cups of water with caps and straws. Certainly, I had never been given sponges shaped like pineapples. In addition to a provided electrolyte drink, we were allowed personalized "specialized fluids." My own E.R.G. awaited me every five kilometers at the very same location on the middle table. I could count on it. If all else failed, a backup table

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for several years now, Springs is the U.S. woman most trapped by the omission of the 5000- and 10,000-meter events from the Olympic schedule. Although she had won her only previous marathon in 2:37:15 over the Olympic course the previous July, Springs' marathon inexperience showed in the way she rushed to the lead at the Trials and refused to cede it until spent.

The first two miles passed in a lazy 11:30, encouraging a throng of over-50 runners to tag along. Moments later, Benoit popped to the head of the field. "I didn't feel comfortable at first," she said. "My legs were tightening up. I knew I had to get out there and run my own race." That meant 5:30s, a tempo-quicken that quickly strung out the crowd.

At 2½ miles the course plunged sharply down a 300-yard hill missing from course elevation maps. This figured to be the place where a weak knee or hamstring would buckle.

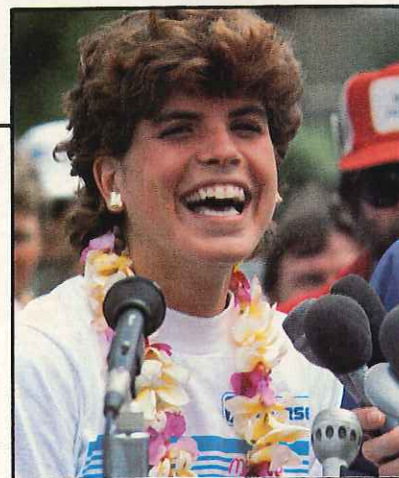
Benoit sprinted down the hill with almost reckless abandon, further thinning the ranks. Then came a moment of horror. Near the bottom, her right foot caught a crease in the road, sending shock tremors up the entire leg, which twisted inward under the wrenching torque. She whirled to see what she had struck, her teeth grinding a silent epithet that wasn't learned at her mother's dining-room table. Benoit had been running with a look of pale fear, barely controlled, but now her eyes fo-

cused even harder and her jaw stiffened. "Concentrate, concentrate" she must have been telling herself. Another such slip and the jig would be up.

Lisa Larsen's moment of truth came just before the seven-mile mark, when Benoit surged, quickly followed by Springs. This was also the crucial moment for Julie Brown. One decided to pursue Benoit and Springs, the other didn't. One made the Olympic team, the other didn't.

Larsen, an Olympic Trials qualifier in 1980 in the 400-meter individual medley swimming event, decided to chase the two Athletics West teammates. A mile and a half later, she had closed to their heels, while Brown lagged 50 yards behind. Later Brown said, "I was checking the time and I knew they were running too fast. I figured they'd all come back to me except maybe for Joan."

Benoit said her most important moment occurred about a mile later. In describing it, she underscored the role tough thinking plays in her races. At the top of the course's steepest hill, across from the Olympia beer company (founded in 1896, the year the modern Olympic Games were founded), Betty Springs spurred to a 10-yard lead. Benoit hesitated. "I was thinking of letting



Rebecca Colligan photo

3RD: JULIE ISPHORDING

The nature of a marathon Trials competition sets the stage for surprises. It's not a race with one winner, but with three. Before the women's Trials everyone pretty much agreed that two of the positions on the Olympic team were in the bag. Joan Benoit and Julie Brown had qualifying times far ahead of anyone else, save Patti Catalano, who was two years away from her best running.

Debate raged back and forth as to who would nab the third spot. But of the candidates, only Julie Isphording had the timing. Isphording picked up 20 places in the last 16.2 miles, moving from 23rd to a spot on the 1984 U.S. Olympic team.

She came into the marathon with only the 45th-best time of the year-long qualifying period, the 2:39 she ran in finishing third in last October's Bank One Marathon in Columbus, Ohio. But Isphording is a better runner than that. Her previous marathon PR was a 2:34:24 in the 1982 New York City Marathon. She had also run 55:43 for 10 miles (1982) and 1:12:58 for the half-marathon (1983). In March of this year, Isphording, always a strength runner, showed that her speed was picking up when she clocked a 52:01 for 15-K and 33:21 for 10-K, PRs both.

One reason for the improvement might have been 10 weeks of training in Orlando, Fla., sunshine. Born, raised and schooled in Cincinnati, Isphording left home the day after the Super Bowl and spent the next 10 weeks with Judy Greer, a 36-minute 10-K runner who lives in Orlando. "People always see the successful product at the end of the line," Isphording said, "but they don't see the behind-the-scenes players. She devoted 10 weeks of her life to me. She wouldn't let me do a thing. She cooked for me, she cleaned, she did my laundry."

And that's not all. To run the course well one needed to be able to shift gears effectively. "Judy taught me how to run the hills," Isphording said. "Every Thursday morning we'd go out for a run over a course with a lot of little hills and

she'd beat me up practically all of them."

OK, then, Julie, tell us what it's like to realize that you're about to make the Olympic team? She had a little trouble with this one—understandably so, since emotions don't always translate well into words, but the sparkle in her eyes would have scored high on any screen test. "When I passed Lisa Larsen," she said, "I didn't know I had third. Well, maybe I sort of knew. I guess I did, but it wasn't until the last half-to-quarter-mile that I said to myself, 'This is it.' Then I just wanted to freeze time. You say to yourself, 'I want this moment forever.'"

Olympic Outlook

Isphording will probably attempt to run the same kind of race in Los Angeles. She won't get sucked into a battle for the gold. The knock-'em-down contest up front could leave a lot of runners dragging over the last six miles, perfect game for Isphording's fast finish.

Heat shouldn't be a problem nor should concentration. After Olympia and a few days back in Cincinnati, Isphording returned to Orlando to live with her friend, Judy Greer, and to train for the Olympics.

Lay on the mollicoddling, Judy. Get her ready.

Robert M. Collins III photo



John Fitzgerald photo

her go," she acknowledged later. "But then I realized that if I let Betty get away, I might do the same if someone else caught me, so I figured it wasn't a good idea." She accelerated back to Springs' side.

Benoit and Springs ran in nearly perfect tandem to the 12-mile point. As Benoit stepped on the paint stripe there, she bolted ahead of her rival, leaving Springs to suffer the long inexorable decline of the overextended marathoner. At 13.1 miles Benoit clocked 1:13:18, six seconds ahead of Springs. Gaps of 100 yards separated Springs from Larsen and Larsen from Brown, as the first eight runners dipped below 1:15.

Over the next four miles, Brown strode easily past both Larsen and Springs, erasing doubts in the minds of many unaccustomed to seeing her lurk in the background. "I planned to run non-competitively for the first 20 miles and then to race the last six if I had to," she explained later. "I probably shouldn't say this, but I felt fairly certain I could make the team." Well, why not say it, especially when you have just loped to a 2:31:41 second-place finish and jogged through the chutes with nary an effort line on your face?

Benoit appeared to have a lock on first,

Benoit's winning time was 37 seconds faster than Julie Brown. The race over, Benoit wept with relief.

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provided water for those who missed the first round.

In spite of best-laid plans, my own pace went awry. And while I'd like to say that I dropped back in the pack to experience the whole spectrum of the race, the plain truth was that the choice wasn't mine to make. I could easily have joined the 40 or so dropouts, but I chose to experience the finish the only way I could and still salvage my screaming hamstrings—slowly.

For the first time, I looked around at the beautiful scenery. There was one street, completely canopied by lush green foliage overhead. There was Capitol Dome looming over Capitol Lake, and green-forested hills all around. The streets were lined with thousands of cheering supporters.

In addition to the crowd enthusiasm, I was touched by the support of my fel-

low competitors. As my own race soured, I often slowed to walk and took comfort in stretching out painful muscles at the aid stations. Seemingly every runner who passed by me offered a kind word. The camaraderie was wonderful. We were bonded in a historical moment.

We were applauded for the entire last mile (it was dubbed the miracle mile). No matter our place or pace, the cheering fans reminded us more than ever what a special moment this was for each of us. After the race, in the finish area, the Olympian treatment continued as we were bedecked with flower leis, treated by medical crews and massage therapists, and supplied with food and drink. Our every need was met.

Later, a dear friend, trying to salve my disappointment, offered consolation that I wish I could share with those who had not been able to finish and the others, like me, who were disappointed with their finish. We had come to run like the champions we are, she said. And no one could fault those of us who tried to run better than we ever had. It reminded me of something I said before my qualifying performance at Boston: "There's no shame in trying and failing, only in not trying at all."

Had the International Runners Com-

mittee/American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit for the women's 5000- and 10,000-meter races been successful, and led to inclusion of these events in the 1984 Olympic Games, the makeup and perhaps the outcome of the Olympic Trials marathon might have changed entirely. For that matter, the selection of women's Olympic marathon teams would have been affected worldwide. The judgment denying a preliminary injunction seeking the addition of these two events to this summer's Games came down April 16. On that same day, Lorraine Moller won the Boston Marathon to ensure a spot on the New Zealand Olympic marathon team. But her friend and countrywoman, Allison Roe, unable to finish Boston, would not be going to Los Angeles. Several other capable world-class runners would not find a spot on the New Zealand team, either. As Moller put it, there are not enough races to go around.

Many women, including myself, are deeply disappointed by the absence of the 5000 and 10,000 in the Olympic Games. Certainly, the significance of the marathon's inclusion should not be overlooked. But it's ironic that, in a year in which there is a distance as long as the marathon, there are no other options for women distance runners.

—Jacqueline Hansen